

**HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE
OF THE
SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE**

Minutes

A regular meeting of the Human Resources Committee of the Suffolk County Legislature was at the William H. Rogers Building, Veterans Memorial Highway, Smithtown, New York in the Rose Y. Caracappa Auditorium on Wednesday, **November 14, 2001** at 11:30 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Legislator Fred Towle, Chairman
Legislator Michael D'Andre, Vice Chair
Legislator Vivian Fisher
Legislator Jon Cooper

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Bruce Dragonette, Assistant Director, Consumer Affairs
Lance Reinheimer, Budget Review office
Marla Musgnug, Legislative Aide to Presiding Officer Tonna
Nanette Essel, Legislative Aide to Legislator Fisher
Barbara LoMoriello, Legislative Aide to Legislator Cooper
Nicole DeAngelo, IR/County Executive's Office

Minutes Taken By:

Kimberly Castiglione, Legislative Secretary

(The meeting was called to order at 11:45 a.m.)

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

If everyone would please rise for a salute to the flag.

(Salutation)

Thank you.

LEGISLATOR FISHER:

I would like to ask for a moment of silence for the Flight 587 tragedy.

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

Absolutely, Legislator Fisher. If we would all just rise for that.

(Moment of Silence)

Thank you. Bruce, welcome.

MR. DRAGONETTE:

Thank you. My name is Bruce Dragonette. I am the Assistant Director of Consumer Affairs and I would just like to make a few comments on the legislation that is being proposed concerning child care centers and the introduction of notification from the Consumer Product Safety concerning dangerous child toys and articles.

The impact of this cannot be stated yet to the Department because we really don't have an idea, unless someone does have an idea, on how many daycare centers this will involve. Our Department now is pretty much at its end with all the laws and other ordinances that we have to govern. So without knowing exactly how many centers we are talking about here, it would really be tough to see if there is going to be an impact on the Department since information has to be collated, gathered, downloaded from a computer from a consumer

product safety and then either typed up in a letter form or in some sort of a poster form or whatever that has to be put up in each one of these daycare centers. We don't know if it is going to take one clerical, two clerical, or how many investigators.

If we are talking seven, eight, ten daycare centers that is no problem at all, but if we are talking four or five hundred, this is going to have an impact on – we are going to need a few people, that's for sure, to go around to all these centers because as the law states, something has to be viewed, has to be visited. The center has to be visited at least once every two months. If we are talking a lot of centers here that is going to take up the time of an investigator just about the whole day to do. If something has to be posted, we just can't make it as a phone call. It has to be viewed to see if it is posted. And then, of course, we have to keep notes and files on each one of these centers, when it was visited, time, date, so on and so forth.

To get up and say what kind of impact it is going to have on the Consumer Affairs Department, we really don't know yet until we know how many centers here we are talking about.

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

Bruce, have you spoken to the sponsor of the bill?

MR. DRAGONETTE:

No, we haven't. No one has contacted us about it, no.

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

Okay. And the reverse, you haven't the contacted the sponsor, either.

MR. DRAGONETTE:

Correct.

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

Okay. Why don't you between now and the next time we meet make it a point to do that and discuss these concerns to the sponsor of the resolution. No one has called me on it one way or the other. Obviously this is the first I have heard of the bill and I am not opposed as one member of the committee to table the bill today to give you an opportunity to meet with the sponsor to see what kind of impact it would have and what their intentions are and maybe if something can be worked out or a compromise can be reached.

MR. DRAGONETTE:

No problem at all. Legislator D'Andre.

LEGISLATOR D'ANDRE:

There is something about this I would like to know.

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

You would probably want to use a mike, Mike.

LEGISLATOR D'ANDRE:

Is this bill saying they are going to examine the child care center for things that are not safe for children?

MR. DRAGONETT:

No. I don't think it states that. It just states that a list of dangerous items, recalled items, that the Consumer Product Safety has issued must be posted in the daycare center. We are not there to see what is used in the daycare center for these children to play with, so to speak. We are not there for that. We are just there to post – from what I understand, we are just there to post this list every two months.

LEGISLATOR D'ANDRE:

I would be very concerned about the help that is there because they don't get much money

and sometimes you don't have the best. I would combine that, while you are doing one thing check the other. Make sure they have topnotch help.

MR. DRAGONETTE:

That is done through the State Education Department. I mean, the people who run them have to be licensed through the State Education Department for daycare centers. We have nothing to do whatsoever with who runs the daycare center and whom they employ.

LEGISLATOR D'ANDRE:

What if you see someone in there that doesn't measure up. You have no say?

MR. DRAGONETTE:

None of us in the department have that expertise on who measures up and who doesn't. We don't have that kind of knowledge.

LEGISLATOR D'ANDRE:

There is no way of telling –

MR. DRAGONETTE:

Well, as I state, the Education Department –

LEGISLATOR D'ANDRE:

You inspect it, don't you?

MR. DRAGONETTE:

We don't inspect them at all.

LEGISLATOR D'ANDRE:

You don't?

MR. DRAGONETTE:

We have nothing to do with the daycare centers.

LEGISLATOR D'ANDRE:

It is just the State?

MR. DRAGONETTE:

The State Education Department licenses the owner of the daycare center.

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

Legislator Fisher, you had a question as well?

LEGISLATOR FISHER:

Yes. Getting back to the listing of the recalled products. Can't that information just be downloaded off the internet? Whenever I hear of a recall there is usually an address that you can reach, a web address, that has a listing.

MR. DRAGONETTE:

There is. But let's just say if there is five or six products, ten products, they can be downloaded. That's no problem at all. But in order to send out this list, and as I said, if it is ten, that's fine, all well and good. That probably won't have an impact at all.

LEGISLATOR FISHER:

In other words, you are saying you don't have a current list of how many daycare centers this would have to go out to.

MR. DRAGONETTE:

Not at all. We have nothing to do with daycare centers at all.

LEGISLATOR FISHER:

Right. Okay. It would then be your responsibility to do this, however.

MR. DRAGONETTE:

Correct.

LEGISLATOR FISHER:

Okay.

MR. DRAGONETTE:

So we don't know, out of the seven categories that this bill addresses, we don't know – Consumer Affairs. I mean, I am assuming Social Services, Health, somebody probably knows how many daycare centers there are.

LEGISLATOR FISHER:

Social Services.

MR. DRAGONETTE:

As I said, it has never been said to us or we don't have any idea on how many there are. And then of course as soon as we find that out then we'd be able to assess our employment needs.

LEGISLATOR FISHER:

Okay. So your issue is not with getting the information, but disseminating the information.

MR. DRAGONETTE:

Because then, as I said, for arguments sake, if there are 500 daycare centers that are funded by Suffolk County in one way or another, that is 500 lists that have to be sent out. Right now we do between five and 700 occupational licensing renewals a month. To add another 500 to that, it is going to take us a few people in order to do that.

LEGISLATOR FISHER:

But this isn't a licensing renewal. It would just be sending out a fax or something.

MR. DRAGONETTE:

Well, it is not sending out a fax. It has to go out in a letter or however – the law doesn't state how it goes out, but it has to get to them.

LEGISLATOR FISHER:

Now, it says in conjunction with the Division of Information Services within the County Department of Human Resources, Personnel and Civil Service. So it is not only your responsibility, it is also Information Services, right? Would they have a list?

MR. DRAGONETTE:

That is just it. We don't know who has this list of County funded daycare centers.

LEGISLATOR FISHER:

I just don't think – I think this is – as Legislator Towle mentioned, we really hadn't taken a look at this earlier and carefully. It seems certainly at face value it seems to be a good idea. I think that probably if you worked in conjunction with another agency that would have the list, if you gave them the information, they could probably disseminate and it probably wouldn't require that much staffing to do this.

MR. DRAGONETTE:

As I said, I couldn't tell you. Until we know, I couldn't tell you what it takes.

LEGISLATOR FISHER:

I have no problem tabling this for one meeting and discussing it with the sponsor.

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

Obviously there is a lot of issues. There is a question of do you have to go out to the sites and inspect them to make sure that these notices are posted, are these notices produced

once a month, are they produced quarterly, are they produced weekly, how is that done. How many daycare facilities are there, when does a new daycare facility open and one close. Obviously there are a lot of questions I'd have. I think the concept is a great concept, but clearly there is a lot of implementation questions, I think, that you need to get answers on internally and also from what Legislator Crecca obviously wanted. Legislator Cooper, you had a question?

LEGISLATOR COOPER:

I just had a couple of more questions to add to the list. Number one, it looks like it doesn't differentiate between recent product recalls and older product recalls, so I would assume that there would be hundreds if not thousands of products over the years that have been recalled that would have to be added to this ever-growing list. Number two, I would have some questions, some concerns, over potential liability to the County if we failed to notify a daycare center on a timely basis of a particular recall and if a child was injured, would the County be liable for the injury or with the death. So again, I would also support the tabling motion.

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

It looks like you have at least two weeks, maybe three, to speak to Legislator Crecca.

MR. DRAGONETTE:

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

Are there any further questions? There being none, we will move to the agenda.

INTRODUCTORY RESOLUTIONS

1845-01 Amending the 2001 Capital Program and Budget and Appropriating Planning Funds for the Construction of a New Day Care Facility. (PRIME)

Does the County Executive's Office want to speak on this at all?

MS. DeANGELO:

No.

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

Any idea on construction?

MS. DeANGELO:

I can find out.

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

I am going to make a motion to approve this because I don't want to delay it.

LEGISLATOR FISHER:

I'll second it.

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

But I do want to have somebody from the County Executive's Office at the next meeting that can bring us up to speed on where we are going with this and give us some timelines.

LEGISLATOR D'ANDRE:

How much money is involved?

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

Do we have an amount on the resolution or on the financial impact?

LEGISLATOR FISHER:

Could that be why Silvia Diaz was at the meeting yesterday? This isn't the same daycare facility, right?

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

No, I think this is the Countywide daycare program. We are finally getting the planning money. I think the contact for that now is Anne Arthur. I don't know who is going to present, that will obviously be up to the County Executive's Office, whoever they want to send. Do we have a copy of the resolution? Legislator D'Andre wanted to know an amount.

LEGISLATOR D'ANDRE:

I see something here about \$200,000.

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

Yes, \$200,000 for planning. Any questions on 1845? There being none, there is a motion to approve and a second by Legislator Fisher. All those in favor? All those opposed? Any abstentions? 1845 is approved 4-0. **(Vote: 4/0/0/0)**. Any cosponsors on that?

LEGISLATOR D'ANDRE:

Yeah, put me down.

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

I thought so, myself as well. I would imagine the other members of the committee as well.

1935-01 Amending the 2001 Operating Budget and Transferring Positions to the Suffolk County Office of HMO Services. (SECONDARY)

Is there anybody to speak on this issue? Any motions on this?

LEGISLATOR FISHER:

I am just trying to see where they are coming from. They are coming from neighborhood aides?

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

I am going to make a motion to table. There really should be someone here to talk to us about this this morning. I just feel uncomfortable approving a bill transferring positions and there is no one here to address us about it.

LEGISLATOR D'ANDRE:

We are not prime.

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

I know we are not prime. You can make a motion to defer if you want. As I said, a motion to table. Second being Legislator D'Andre. Any discussion on that? There being none, all those in favor? All those opposed? 1935 is tabled. **(Vote: 4/0/0/0)**

2000-01 Requiring Child Product Recall Notification at Day Care Centers. (PRIME)

LEGISLATOR FISHER:

Motion to table.

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

Motion to table by Legislator Fisher, seconded by myself. Any discussion? There being none, all those in favor? All those opposed? 2000 is tabled. **(Vote: 4/0/0/0)**

2015-01 Accepting and Appropriating 100% Federal Funding for Registration and Inspection of Child Care Providers and Authorizing the Commissioner of Social Services and the County Executive to Amend the Contract. (PRIME)

LEGISLATOR FISHER:

Motion.

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

Motion by Legislator Fisher, second by Legislator Cooper.

LEGISLATOR FISHER:

Could this be put on the consent calendar?

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

Motion to approve and put on the consent calendar. That is exactly where I was going to go with that as soon I caught a breath.

LEGISLATOR FISHER:

Sorry.

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

That's okay. Any discussion? There being none, all those in favor? All those opposed? 2015 is approved. **(Vote: 4/0/0/0)**

2066-01 To Impose Civil Service Fees. (PRIME)

Is there anybody here from Civil Service to speak about the fee increases? Anything from the County Executive's Office on this? Okay.

LEGISLATOR FISHER:

Legislator Towle, again, because of things that you have mentioned earlier – may I?

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

Go right ahead, Legislator Fisher.

LEGISLATOR FISHER:

I would like to hear from somebody in the department to know if there are any problems with this. Although it is a good idea, I don't know if there would be any problem with the implementation.

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

Sounds like a motion to table to me.

LEGISLATOR FISHER:

It sounds like a motion to table, yes.

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

I'll second that. Any discussion? There being none, 2066 is tabled 4-0. **(Vote: 4/0/0/0).** We also had a Sense, Sense 63.

SENSE RESOLUTIONS

63-01 Memorializing Resolution Requesting State of New York to Establish Regents Child Care Professional Loan Forgiveness Program. (PRIME)

LEGISLATOR FISHER:

That is my resolution, that's my Sense Resolution. There is currently a movement in the State to try to encourage – this is going back to what Legislator D'Andre was speaking to earlier, which is that we are trying to raise the level of qualifications of those people who are providing child care for children. We are certainly supporting the State program for a loan forgiveness program to encourage people to go into this field as a career field.

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

Motion to approve by Legislator Fisher. Seconded by Legislator Cooper. Any discussion? There being none, I imagine you can add the whole committee as a cosponsor. All in favor?

All opposed? Any abstentions? Sense 63 is approved. **(Vote: 4/0/0/0)**

LEGISLATOR FISHER:

Motion to adjourn.

LEGISLATOR COOPER:

Second.

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

And in a land speed record, our meeting once again has adjourned in 20 minutes. Thank you.

(The meeting was adjourned at 11:50 a.m.)